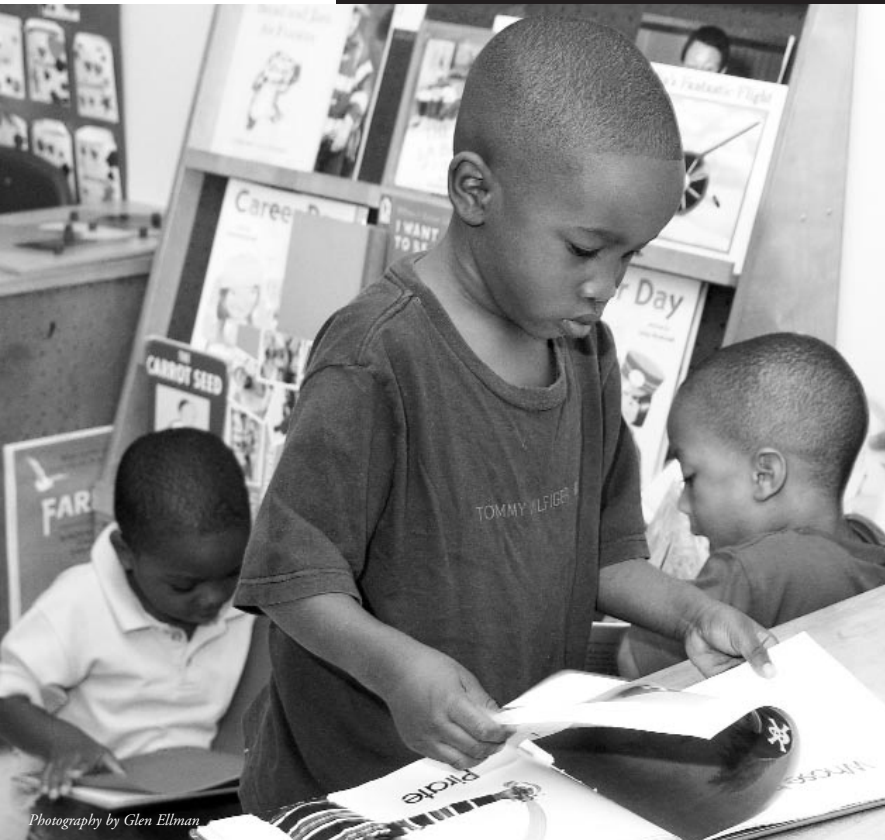


COMMUNITY

Issue No. 86

U P D A T E

April 2001



Photography by Glen Ellman

“The parents come back, saying, ‘I just want to thank you all for what you did for my child and me.’”

*Lue Alma Sumlin, director of the
Margaret H. Cone Head Start Center*

FULL STORY ON PAGE 4

President Issues Education Blueprint

“No Child Left Behind” Plan Includes Reading, Other Improvements

In one of his first official acts, President George W. Bush issued his blueprint for improving American education, called “No Child Left Behind.” The plan proposes legislative actions and changes in U.S. Department of Education programs aimed at strengthening elementary and secondary schools and closing the achievement gap between rich and poor and white and minority students.

“I am pleased and proud that President Bush has made education his top priority,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige in testimony before the U.S. Congress. “Our com-

mitment to providing a first-class education to all our children is clear.”

The “No Child Left Behind” blueprint is based on four principles:

- **Increase accountability for student performance:** States, districts and schools that improve achievement would be rewarded. Failure will be sanctioned. Parents would know how well their child is learning, and that schools are held accountable for their effectiveness with annual state reading and math assessments in grades 3–8.
- **Focus on what works:** Federal dollars would be spent on effective, research-based programs and practices. Funds would be targeted to improve schools and enhance teacher quality.
- **Reduce bureaucracy and increase flexibility:** Additional flexibility would be provided to states and school districts, and flexible funding would be increased at the local level.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

COMMENTS

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Community Update contains news and information about public and private organizations for the reader's information. Inclusion does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any products or services offered or views expressed.

2001 Notable Children's Books

Below are books recommended by the American Library Association for younger readers, or for parents to read with their children.* For a complete listing, visit www.ala.org/alsc/nbook01.html, or call 1-800-545-2433.

America's Champion Swimmer:

Gertrude Ederle, by David A. Adler

Despite all odds, Ederle's determination to be the first woman to swim the English Channel, twenty-one arduous miles of cold, choppy water, leads to personal triumph and a victory for all womankind.

Night Worker, by Kate Banks

Alex visits his father's construction site one night and discovers a world that is as fascinating and mysterious as it is warm and inviting.

Olivia, by Ian Falconer

The days of one irrepressible pig are busy from morning to night, as Olivia excels at everything, including wearing people out!

Iris and Walter

by Elissa Haden Guest

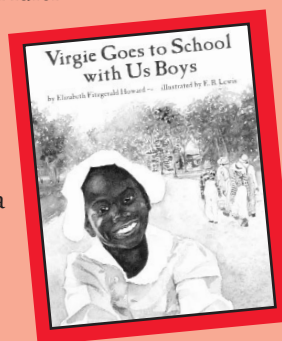
In four easy-to-read chapters, Iris discovers a new friend and decides

that maybe life in the country is not so bad after all.

Wemberly Worried

by Kevin Henkes

Wemberly worries about everything, especially about beginning nursery school. Her courage grows with family support and a successful first day.

***Virgie Goes to School with Us Boys***

by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard
Virgie, a spunky young African-American girl living in the post-Civil War South, is determined to join

her brothers at the local Quaker school.

Days Like This: A Collection of Small Poems, by Simon James

An anthology of brief, expressive poems, traditional and modern, celebrates everyday experiences like jumping on the bed, illustrated with cartoon watercolors outlined in ink.

**The U.S. Department of Education does not endorse particular books, and recommends that families review this list and make their own decision on the suitability of the books for their children.*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

- **Empower parents:** Parents would have more information about the quality of their child's school. Students in persistently low-performing schools would be given more options.

The plan would make significant changes in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in areas such as improving academic performance of disadvantaged students, boosting teacher quality, moving limited English proficient students to English fluency, and encouraging safe schools.

The president also proposed dramatic increases in funding for education in his Fiscal Year 2002 budget request. For elementary and secondary education, the Education Department would receive a \$1.6 billion increase, and education funding to other federal agencies would grow by \$340 million.

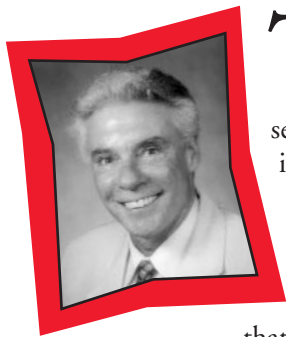
The president also proposes almost \$1 billion for reading programs and \$2.6 billion for states to improve teacher quality and recruitment. He would provide an additional \$1 billion for Pell Grants for disadvantaged students seeking financial assistance for higher education.

"Since his first day in office, President Bush has demonstrated his commitment to providing every child in America with access to a quality education at all levels," said Secretary Paige. "The budget blueprint further demonstrates his commitment to America's students."

For up-to-date information on these initiatives, visit the Department's Web site at www.ed.gov, or call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327). A copy of *No Child Left Behind* can be downloaded from www.ed.gov/inits/nclb/index.html, or call 1-877-4ED-PUBS (1-877-433-7827) for a paper publication.

Solid Research, Solid Teaching

By G. Reid Lyon, Bethesda, Maryland



Teachers frequently tell me that they see little value in basing their teaching practices on the results of “educational research.”

They point out that the research reports are difficult to understand, frequently do not apply to the specific children they are teaching, and often reflect “turf battles” between academics espousing different research philosophies.

I know firsthand the devastating effect that poor quality research has on teaching practices and the trust teachers have in educational research. As a brand new third-grade teacher in the mid-1970s, I was responsible for teaching 28 students of varying abilities and backgrounds. Unfortunately, many of my students had not yet learned basic reading skills and were clearly floundering in almost every aspect of their academic work.

However, the university courses that I had taken to become certified as an elementary school teacher led me to believe these youngsters would learn to read when they were ready. Likewise, my school’s reading curriculum was based on the assumption that learning to read was a natural process, similar to learning to listen and speak. Thus children did not need to be taught basic reading skills in a systematic or direct manner.

At the beginning of the year, a third of my students read so slowly and inaccurately that they could not comprehend what they read. Their spelling was also nothing to write home about. Unfortunately, by the end of the year, these same students continued to read slowly and inaccurately. The only change I could discern was that their motivation to read had waned—they would actually avoid reading—and their self-esteem

had suffered considerably. Likewise, I felt like a failure as a teacher.

It wasn’t until later in my research career that I learned that the way I was trained to teach reading, and the way that the reading series recommended that literacy concepts should be taught, were based upon research that was questionable at best. Indeed, I came to learn later that the assumptions upon which the instructional philosophy and methods rested had never been adequately tested through well-designed studies.

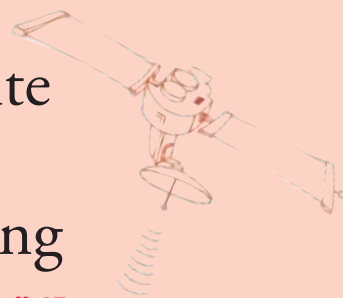
Today’s teachers have a number of resources that can help them discriminate between research that can be trusted and research that cannot be. Now, when almost every reading program and set of instructional materials are said to be “research-based,” teachers need to know that many of these products are based upon beliefs and dogma rather than on scientific data.

One such resource is *The Report of the National Panel—An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*, available free by request at www.nationalreadingpanel.org. The report is published jointly by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the U.S. Department of Education, and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). NIFL, a government agency that disseminates evidence-based information on reading, is also developing information and tools specifically for teachers.

All teachers want to do the best for their students. When our children learn, everyone wins. Solid, research-based approaches can help children do just that!

G. Reid Lyon is a research psychologist and chief of the Child Development and Behavior Branch at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development within the National Institutes of Health. In addition to serving as a third-grade classroom teacher, he taught children with learning disabilities and served as a school psychologist for 12 years.

Satellite Town Meeting



**Tuesday, April 17
8:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. E.T.**

Schools and school districts are discovering that faith-based and community-serving organizations can be important allies in supporting students’ learning. With their shared mission of helping children and families, these groups are assisting schools by providing tutoring and mentoring, safe havens for children, after-school programs and more. Strong partnerships between schools and faith-based and community-serving groups often work best when they are part of a broader collaborative effort that also draws in local agencies, businesses and family organizations.

Secretary Paige’s April 17 Satellite Town Meeting will explore ways that schools can:

- Partner with faith-based and community organizations in ways that honor students’ religious identity, and thus draw on some of the most important institutions in their lives;
- Respect the diverse beliefs, both sacred and secular, of students and their families; and
- Create partnerships that give various faith-based and neighborhood groups a chance to participate.

To join the Satellite Town Meeting, call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327), or visit www.ed.gov/satelliteevent. Also, view live or archived Webcasts of the meeting by visiting Apple Computer’s Apple Learning Interchange at <http://ali.apple.com/events/aliqttv/>.

The Satellite Town Meeting is produced by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Alliance of Business, with support from the Bayer Foundation, the Procter and Gamble Fund and Target Stores.

Reading by Leaps & Bounds



How a Dallas Head Start Program Has Its Children Jumping Ahead

Few of the four-year-olds entering the Margaret H. Cone Head Start Center have spent time on a parent's lap turning the pages of an open book, listening to an animated voice, and watching a big finger point to the pictures. On language pre-tests, many score on the bottom rung. Yet, by the time they begin kindergarten, graduates of the Cone Center rank at the top of their class on reading and vocabulary assessments.

"There's a big difference between the students we receive from Margaret Cone and those who have not attended the Center," said Francesca Ashbury, chair of the kindergarten department at the local elementary school. "They can sit for long periods of time. They have fine motor skills, such as using scissors and holding pencils. They understand letter-sound association...We find them to be like mentors to their classmates."

The Margaret Cone Center is a collaborative effort founded in 1990 by the Texas Instruments Foundation and Head Start of Greater Dallas, which

provides comprehensive services each year to 90 disadvantaged students, most of whom live in the housing project across the street. At the center of the model is a curriculum package called LEAP—for "Language Enrichment Activities Program"—which focuses on building cognitive and language skills in young children, and has the twin task of training teachers and parents, in order to ensure success in kindergarten and beyond.

The Learning Therapy Program at Southern Methodist University developed LEAP in 1993 at the request of Texas Instruments Foundation to remedy lagging student performance. In spite of the health, nutritional and social services the children were receiving, they continued to enter kindergarten performing well below average. "You can't address one part without addressing the other because it all goes together in the development of a child and that child's success," says Lue Alma Sumlin, director of the Center.

The university team observing the

children over the next three years designed a program to bring the children up to par. Results were soon apparent: scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills gradually increased from 20–30 median percentiles in 1991–92 to 60–70 percentiles in 1994–95. Last year's scores on a new evaluation, the Stanford 9, continued to be well above the national norms.

Building Language Skills

LEAP provides a 20-week lesson plan to be used with small groups of children throughout the day. The lessons center on building language in six parts—with stories, words, sounds, letters, ideas, and pre-writing motor skills. By the time they reach kindergarten, the children are able to name the letters of the alphabet, retell a story in their own words, and speak in complete sentences, among other skills.

Each child is assessed at the beginning and end of the program, as part of a comprehensive evaluation plan; parents are given pre- and post-surveys; and the progress of children in the local public school system is tracked.

Teachers must participate in a one-day workshop before joining the program, in which they practice teaching parts of the lesson with an educator from the Center. In addition, trained



Director Lue Alma Sumlin.

volunteers go to the classroom each week and serve as model teachers. Additional funds from the Texas Instruments Foundation help keep a full-time nurse practitioner and two full-time social workers on staff.

Easing Transitions

Helping children make the transition to kindergarten also includes partnering with the neighborhood elementary school that they will eventually attend.

In 1996, the Cone Center began "vertical teaming" with Julius C. Frazier Elementary when Principal Rachael George was brought on board. They meet every three months, but communicate often, to discuss what Frazier expects their incoming students to know. The children also are brought over once a year for a tour of Frazier and lunch with the other students, as part of the plan to acclimate them early to elementary school life.

Only a block away, former students who Sumlin says are as tall as she is now return to Cone quite often to update the teachers on their progress, showing Honor Roll certificates and trophies from the Spelling Bee. She adds, "The parents come back, saying, 'I just want to thank you all for what you did for my child and me.'"

Olistha Mullins reads with daughter Zaria.

Learning at Home

Bridging the gap between potential and achieving readers, Ashbury points out, can only be as effective as the level of parent participation.

"If you're at home, and you're not made to read anything or to ever pick up a book or a pencil, you just kind of lose interest," she says. "It's not important to you because you can do everything else and don't have to read."

The Margaret Cone Head Start Center prepares parents to be their child's first educator by providing a number of parent involvement activities that factor in a daily time for reading.

"Sometimes it's just not understanding the role of a parent and what raising a child is about," explains Sumlin about the need for parenting classes. "Sometimes a lack of positive role models from their own parents affects the way they parent their children." Reading to a child from infancy, she says, is the best introduction to language and a wonderful bonding activity for the parent and child.

An especially promising initiative has been a six-week employment program at the Center for parents, many of whom are single mothers in their teens or early 20s.

Olistha Mullins, a mother of two who volunteers at the Center, said

that as a result of working with the children she now has her sights set on teaching. "With me having kids, I was kind of negative about myself, meaning that I didn't want to go back to school," she explained. "And now I'm pushed to learn more because I feel like I have something that I can offer other kids and parents as well."

Regularly scheduled workshops provide information on the development of pre-reading skills and language enrichment. The workshops, which Mullins says taught her "how to adjust" to her daughter's learning, allow one-on-one interaction with teachers and support staff for guidance. "Being with the teachers is like having a second family," says Mullins.

To encourage more reading in the home, the Center has a collection of videotapes on how to teach children at home, a "Read to Me" contest, and a lending library. Mullins, who reads to her daughter every night, quite often checks out Zaria's favorite book *The Three Little Bears*. She muses, "Now she's more like wanting to read to me."

To learn more about the Margaret H. Cone Head Start Center in Dallas and the Language Enrichment Activities Program, visit the Web site for the Texas Instruments Foundation at www.ti.com/corp/docs/company/citizen/foundation/leaps-bounds/learning.shtml, or call Ann Minnis, grants director, at 972-917-4505.

Photography by Glen Ellman





PARTNERSHIP

for Family Involvement in Education

*A coalition of more than 7,100 business, community, religious and education organizations nationwide.
To join the Partnership, call 1-800-USA-LEARN or visit <http://pfie.ed.gov>.*

PBS Series *Between The Lions* Launches Second Season

Program Helps Young Children Boost Reading Skills, Study Suggests

Television is often thought to be the enemy of reading, and certainly mothers and fathers need to carefully monitor their children's TV watching. But thoughtful, well-produced television programming can support parents' and teachers' efforts to create strong reading skills in young children.

One example is *Between the Lions*, broadcast daily by Public Broadcasting System (PBS) member stations as part of its "Ready To Learn" service for young children. This month *Between the Lions* begins its second season with 25 new episodes and introduces a new character, Gus the Rabbit. Created at the request of the National Center for Learning Disabilities, Gus will touch children who have difficulty reading, whatever the cause. Because Gus is successful in every way—except in learning to read—the character shows children that there is no shame in struggling to read and that help is available.

A recent study commissioned by PBS and conducted by the University of Kansas showed that beginning readers benefit from watching *Between the Lions*. Watching just 8.5 hours significantly raised the reading skills and scores of kindergartners, according to the study. The same research also

showed that beginning readers enjoyed watching the program, with one in six calling it their favorite television show. PBS reports that *Between the Lions* is watched by some 56 million children.

Sixteen national organizations committed to literacy and early childhood education work with PBS as part of the *Between the Lions*' outreach initiative. The organizations, which include the American Library Association, the Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., the International Reading Association and Reading is Fundamental, carry out a variety of projects. The organizations also disseminate information about the *Between the Lions* Designated Reader campaign to educators, literacy professionals, librarians and families.

With Ready To Learn, PBS and its member stations support efforts to prepare children for school success in a variety of ways, including offering on-air and online programming on specific educational goals; creating interactive online resources for children and caregivers; and presenting community outreach and educational materials for families and local organizations. PBS has been a member of the Partnership for Family Involvement since 1998, and the Ready to Learn Service is funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

To find out more about Ready To Learn, visit www.pbskids.org/grownups/readytolearn. Children's games and stories based on *Between the Lions* are available at www.pbskids.org/lions.

Theo the head librarian reads to son Lionel and Lionel's friend, Gus.



ABOUT *our* PARTNERS

A Roundup of Recent Activities



Father and son work together during a workshop by the Center for Successful Fathering.

Center for Successful Fathering

Picking a quiet place to read, playing phonics games, and “making stories interesting by making faces and different voices for characters” were among the suggestions elementary school students presented to their fathers as ways to engage them in reading during a workshop conducted by the Center for Successful Fathering (CSF). “When fathers enter the imaginative literary world by playing and acting out characters, they become emotionally accessible to their children and better connected to their education,” says Executive Director Alphonso Rincón. Since 1997, CSF has provided training and technical assistance through its

curriculum, “Accepting the Challenges of Fatherhood,” to schools across Texas. For more information, visit www.fathering.org, or call 1-800-537-0853.

Center for the Improvement of Child Caring

The Center for the Improvement of Child Caring (CICC) in Los Angeles County recently received grants totaling \$5.4 million over three years from the local Proposition 10 Commission, which funnels tobacco tax funds into improving early childhood development. The county has one of California’s largest populations of children from infants to 5 years old. In addition to offering culturally specific parenting classes including “Los Niños Bien Educados” and “Effective Black Parenting,” the Center prepares childcare personnel at numerous sites to train parents as their child’s first educators. Because parents entrust their children to caregivers, said CICC Founder Kerby Alvy, “they are perfect for advocating to parents how to be more effective in raising their kids and creating homes that are school ready.” For more information about CICC and its parent training materials, visit www.ciccparenting.org, or call 1-800-325-2422.

National Jewish Coalition for Literacy

The National Jewish Coalition for Literacy (NJCL) and its Los Angeles

affiliate Koreh L.A. recently completed a recruitment drive for reading volunteers among local synagogues and Jewish organizations in the Los Angeles area. More than 1,000 volunteers signed up to read with students in grades K–3 at 55 public schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District. “People want to help. You just have to make it easy on them by offering a program that makes them feel good about the time they are donating,” says NJCL Director Craig Sumberg. For more information about NJCL’s efforts nationwide, visit www.njcl.net, or call 212-545-9215.

Pizza Hut®

Approximately 1.5 million children in 30,000 childcare centers across the country are participating in an early reading initiative sponsored by Pizza Hut® called “BOOK IT! Beginners®.” The two-month program encourages teachers and parents to read aloud to young children to begin a lifelong love of reading. When these pre-schoolers enter elementary school, they can join the BOOK IT!® program, a reading incentive effort for grades K–6. Children in both programs receive a certificate for a Personal Pan Pizza® when they reach their reading goals. For information on enrollment in the BOOK IT!® program—available free of charge to schools and licensed childcare facilities—visit www.bookitprogram.com, or call 1-800-4-BOOKIT.



April 18–21, Washington, D.C.
Children’s Defense Fund’s Annual National Conference “Leave No Child Behind: Transforming the World for Children.” Call 1-800-CDF-1200 and select option #3, or visit www.childrensdefense.org/activitypage.htm.

May 10–11, Washington, D.C.
Business and Education 2001 Conference: “Leveraging Technology—A Call to Action.” Call The Conference Board at 212-339-0345, or visit www.conference-board.org/b&e.htm.

May 31–June 1, Westborough, Mass.
Massachusetts Parent Involvement Project 2001 Conference/Showcase. Call Patrice Garvin at 617-695-9771, or e-mail pgarvin@mits.org.

June 7–8, Washington, D.C.
The National Fatherhood Initiative’s Fourth Annual Summit on Fatherhood: “Broadening the Reach.” Call 301-948-0599, or visit www.fatherhood.org/summit.htm.

While these resources are relevant to the mission of the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, they are available from a variety of sources and their presence here does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Reading by Leaps & Bounds



PAGE 4

Marks of a Good Early Reading Program

Children with rich literacy experiences are much more likely to start school ready to read. Pre-school programs that focus on building skills such as letter recognition, vocabulary use, and sound awareness prepare a child for kindergarten and for later school success. Below are a few tips that define a quality early reading program.

- Every teacher is excited about reading and promotes the value and fun of reading to students.
- All students are carefully evaluated, beginning in kindergarten, to see what they know and what they need to become good readers.
- Reading instruction and practice last 90 minutes or more a day in first, second and third grades and 60 minutes a day in kindergarten.
- Students have daily spelling practice and weekly spelling tests.
- The connection between reading and writing is taught on a daily basis. Students write daily. Papers are corrected and returned to the students.
- All students are read to each day from different kinds of books. Students discuss what they read with teachers and other students.
- Every classroom has a library of books that children want to read. This includes easy books and books that are more difficult.

The full text of *A Guide for Parents: How Do I Know a Good Early Reading Program When I See One?*, written by First Lady Laura Bush, is available at www.ed.gov/inits/rrrl/guide.html, or call 1-877-4ED-PUBS for a copy.

